

# CALIFORNIA QUAIL



In the State of Oregon

The California quail (*Lophortyx californica*), also known as valley quail, is a native bird originally confined to the counties bordering California and Nevada. Trapping and transplanting operations have extended its range to include all eastern Oregon and most western Oregon counties. Highest densities of California quail are found in the Columbia Basin and in central and southeastern Oregon where it provides excellent hunting.

## HABITAT NEEDS

Quail need food, water and cover closely arranged together and are usually found in the brushy cover along perennial streams and side draws of areas which are generally below 4,000 feet in elevation. Severe winter weather in eastern Oregon often results in the loss of large numbers of these birds.

Food. Quail eat a wide variety of seeds and vegetable matter of wild and cultivated plants along with some fruits, succulents, and insects.

Choice foods can be planted, established, or protected where the land owner or operator wishes to attract and hold quail. Some of these foods include:

Alfalfa	Cheatgrass (green leaves)	Pigweed
Apple	Clover (sweet and subterranean)	Smartweed
Barley	Millet (proso and foxtail)	Vetch
Barnyardgrass	Oats	Wheat

Fair foods which are not eaten as readily include:

Black locust	Goosefoot	Rose
Burdock	Grape	Sedge
Bluegrass	Knotweed	Snowberry
Corn	Mustard	Sunflower
Dandelion	Ragweed	Ricegrass
Dock	Thistle - Canadian, Russian	

Cover. Quail need cover for most activities and these birds are never found very far from it. Cover along fence rows, ditches or through old farm machinery is used as travel routes to feeding areas, as escape or loafing areas, and as roosting areas in shrubs or trees.

Water. Quail require water and a lack of it limits distribution of these birds. Quail never range very far from water.

#### MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. Plant or protect suitable cover for quail so that food, cover, and water are closely arranged together.
2. Quail are attracted by choice foods planted or left after harvest near good quail cover.
3. Quail must have good cover and food during winter weather. In eastern Oregon, during unusually severe winter weather, it may be necessary to feed quail.
4. Hunting for quail is best after a large covey has been scattered, thus allowing the flushing of small groups or single quail. Quail are more difficult to hunt in the thick cover found in western Oregon.